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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 000267

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 26, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 26, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL

CUMHURIYET / EVRENSEL / TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: The Diyarbakir Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation into a book (in Kurdish and Turkish) on plays and handicrafts that the Sur Municipality distributed to teachers and parents as a guide on October 5th in honor of World Teachers' Day. According to the Prosecutor's office, the book violates the law requiring that only the Turkish alphabet can be used in educational materials.

TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: The Yuksekova Prosecutor's Office initiated a lawsuit against a person who, in an interview with Roj TV about the cease-fire, referred to the guerillas who died in the clashes as 'martyrs'. That remark, according to the Prosecutor, constituted a breach of law because it "praised evildoers."

EVRENSEL: According to the daily, there was significant local interest in the discussion panel entitled "Kurdish issues, democracy and peace" which was recently held in the Bursa province.

EVRENSEL / TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI / RADIKAL: A group of journalists interviewed Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir. Baydemir told the journalists that the government should approach resource allocation fairly and should implement policies on the basis of equality for all of Turkey's provinces. Baydemir added that he was currently refraining from extending direct political messages lest they cast a shadow over the enormous issues facing Diyarbakir province, such as infrastructure problems and poverty. Baydemir said that aside from Istanbul and Ankara, Diyarbakir was one of the most important three provinces of Turkey. As a result, in Baydemir's words, a developing Diyarbakir should be considered synonymous with a developing Turkey. Separately, Radikal highlighted Baydemir's remarks last week at the opening of Diyarbakir's new bus terminal. Baydemir reportedly complained that he had not been able to meet with PM Erdogan for nearly a year and a half, since the day PM Erdogan came to Diyarbakir in August 2005.

TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: Francis Wurtz, the Leader of the United Left party in the European Parliament, said that the Kurdish issue could not be resolved by military force and that Turkish authorities should seize the historic opportunity presented by

the PKK's cease-fire. Wurtz demanded that the EU should put pressure on Turkey to resolve the Kurdish issue.

TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: As a result of growing interest of Dutch companies in northern Iraq, Holland announced that it will open a consulate in northern Iraq to develop relationships and ties in the region.

EVRENSEL / CUMHURİYET: The CHP's Adana chapter held a ceremony in Adana to mark the thirty-third anniversary of the death of İsmet İnönü, second president of the Turkish Republic. Ceremonies in Ankara, İzmir and Malatya also commemorated President İnönü. (Note: Malatya is the hometown of Mr. İnönü. End Note.)

TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: The DTP Provincial party's organization in Gaziantep organized a feast to thank the local citizenry for their warm welcome as the "Walk for Peace" convoy passed through the province last week on its way to Ankara (please see press summary for December 18).

SECURITY

TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: A 17 year-old boy lost an eye when a mortar shell, which he discovered while grazing his cattle, exploded. Soldiers had allegedly left the ordnance in the field following a military exercise.

ZAMAN / CUMHURİYET: The Şırnak Governor's Office announced that security personnel caught two PKK members during a road check held on December 24 in a section of Şırnak. Zaman daily reported that security personnel found 21 kilograms of heroin in a hidden panel in the couriers' car. Cumhuriyet daily reported that two Kalashnikov assault rifles, 68 pistols, one night

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vision device, and three mobile phones were found with the two suspects.

ECONOMY

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) / EVRENSEL / ZAMAN / TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: Ali Er, Chairperson of Parliamentary Commission for Fresh Vegetables, Fruit and Citrus Fruit, said the Commission was working to provide a subsidy amounting to 100 USD per ton to facilitate citrus fruit exports. Mr. Er further stated that current problems with the citrus fruit export process came from errors made during multiple stages to include production, packaging and unloading.

CUMHURİYET: The Free Trade Agreement signed between Syria and Turkey, which will take effect as of January 1, reportedly aims to reduce the current importance of the Habur Border Gate in Şırnak as a hub in transporting goods to Iraq through the Kurdish Regional Authority.

CULTURE / SOCIETY / ENVIRONMENT

SABAH (GUNEY): Catholic Churches of the Antakya and İskenderun districts in Hatay observed Christmas mass. People sung hymns, read the Bible and prayed. Luigi Padovese, Representative of the Anatolian Papacy and Head of the Turkish Catholic Bishops Council, extended messages of friendship and peace during the talk he delivered at the mass held at Saint Pierre Church.

SABAH (GUNEY): The Dean of the Agricultural Faculty of the Cukurova University in Adana said that the university-owned proposed site for the construction of a 400-bed hospital, a mosque, and a hotel was first class agricultural land. The Dean added that this plot of land had been the subject of numerous research initiatives to date (please see press summary for December 25). The land reportedly belongs to the University's Cotton Research Center.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) / SABAH (GUNEY): Gaziantep celebrated

the city's 85th anniversary of its liberation from French occupation. In a public speech marking the event, State Minister Kursat Tuzmen stated that the Turkish people had never, throughout their history, committed or abetted genocide.

EVRENSEL / TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: Village guards and soldiers are allegedly cutting down trees in a 7400 acre forested area in Sirnak's Idil district due to security concerns in the area. They have reportedly received permission from the Regional Directorate of Environment and Forests to do so. Village guards are reportedly selling truckloads of oak trees for 200 to 300 YTL per truck. The Mayor of the Idil district reacted strongly to this activity, and criticized the Directorate for pursuing forestry policies in the southeast that were sharply divergent from those followed in western Turkey.

EVRENSEL / TOPLUMSAL DEMOKRASI: One hundred and forty delegates attended the Kurdish Music Conference, held December 23-24 in Diyarbakir's Baglar district (please see press summary for December 25). The concluding statement called for efforts to protect and develop Kurdish culture and music, and demanded that countries such as Iran, Turkey and Syria stop exerting pressure on Kurdish culture. The report also recommended that Culture Ministry abandon its policies allegedly denying the presence of Kurdish culture, that it extend financial and institutional support to it instead.

ZAMAN / HURRIYET: The Toroslar Municipality in Mersin used 5 tons of paint in portraying a giant (1.1 acre) Turkish flag at the foot of a hill in Mersin.

ZAMAN: For the first time after the rain-based flooding disaster 41 days ago, rain fell in the province again. Many people expressed their joy that rain had started to fall again, since dust had blanketed the region over the six weeks of near-drought.

GREEN